



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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November 12, 2003

TO: Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite Burke, Chair  
Supervisor Gloria Molina  
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky  
Supervisor Don Knabe  
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley   
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **GROUP HOME PROGRAM MONITORING REPORT – SANDHILL  
GROUP HOME**

We have completed a review of Sand Hill Group Home (Sand Hill). Sand Hill contracts with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the Probation Department (Probation). Sand Hill is a six-bed facility, located in the Second Supervisorial District that provides care for children ages 15-17 years who exhibit behavioral, social, and emotional difficulties. At the time of the monitoring visit, Sand Hill was providing services for five Los Angeles County DCFS children.

**Scope of Review**

The purpose of the review was to verify that Sand Hill Group Home was providing the services outlined in its Program Statement. Additionally, the review covered basic child safety and licensing issues and included an evaluation of Sand Hill's Program Statement, internal policies and procedures, child case records, a facility inspection, and interviews with two children placed with Sand Hill at the time of the review. The interviews with the residents were designed to obtain their perspectives on the program services provided by Sand Hill, and to ensure adherence to the Foster Youth Bill of Rights.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

### Summary of Findings

The review disclosed that Sand Hill was not complying with a significant number of contract requirements. **The problems noted in this review are significant and should have previously been noted and reported by the Children's Social Workers who were supposed to be visiting each resident on a monthly basis. DCFS management should determine why the Children's Social Workers did not previously require that the agency address the numerous deficiencies discussed in this report. In addition, DCFS needs to meet immediately with the Director of this Agency to discuss these serious contract deficiencies.**

The following is a summary of areas requiring correction. Sand Hill needs to:

- make repairs to its facility;
- improve its Needs and Services Plans and Quarterly Reports;
- maintain current court authorizations for psychotropic medications;
- provide counseling services and daily living skill training;
- include residents in the planning of recreational activities and provide them with adequate and appropriate recreation programs;
- allow residents to spend leisure time as they wish;
- provide adequate supervision at all times;
- develop discipline policies that are fair and just for all residents;
- counsel staff regarding the proper interaction with residents and monitor their behavior;
- allow residents to go home on weekends per court order;
- provide adequate meals during the weekend;
- allow residents religious freedom;
- provide residents with privacy during phone calls and visits;
- maintain DCFS' clothing standards for each resident;
- allow residents to select their own clothing;

- properly maintain clothing allowance logs;
- provide residents with the required fifty dollars a month clothing allowance;
- implement a point/levels/rewards behavioral control system by which residents can increase their base allowances; and
- provide each resident with a life book.

Attached is a detailed report of the review findings.

### **Review of Report**

We discussed our report with the Agency's management. The Agency's management is required to provide DCFS with a written corrective action plan within fifteen business days from receipt of this report.

If you have any questions, please contact me, or have your staff contact Patrick McMahon at (213) 974-0729.

JTM:PM:CC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer  
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee  
David Sanders, Ph.D., Director, DCFS  
Richard Shumsky, Chief Probation Officer

**SAND HILL GROUP HOME**  
**12108 S. Normandie Ave.**  
**Los Angeles, CA 90044**  
**Phone: 323-777-5588**  
**License No.: 191801773**  
**Rate Classification Level: 9**

**I. FACILITY AND ENVIRONMENT**

*(Facility Based - No Sample)*

**Method of assessment – Observation and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Two**

**Comments:**

Sand Hill is located in a residential neighborhood of moderately maintained homes. There was debris on the side of the house and a cover missing over a large crawl space. A railing at the back door presented a safety hazard due to sharp edges and being unstable. Iron bars covering the windows needed painting as did the garage door. In addition, the front lawn was brown needing attention.

In the interior of the home, there were multiple areas needing improvement.

In the living room, the patio/window door was dirty and the patio door needed a screen. In the dining room, the table needed tightening, the window blinds were dirty, and the patio door needed a screen. In the family room, the sofa was worn.

In the kitchen, all of the cabinets and drawers needed cleaning. One cabinet located under the window and another cabinet beneath the oven were damaged. The interior of the microwave oven needed cleaning, the vent over the stove was full of grease, and there was a large hole in the back wall under the kitchen sink. There was a delay when the stove top burners were turned on causing a noticeable release of gas into the room presenting a safety hazard.

In bathroom number one, the toilet seat was worn and badly stained, there was a noticeable urine smell, and the area behind the toilet and the walls needed cleaning. There was a hole in the wall next to the toilet and under the sink around the pipe and no towels or soap for residents' use.

In bathroom number two, the tile around the shower had soap scum and mildew, and caulk around the sink, and the area around the toilet needed cleaning. The area under the sink needed to be cleaned and had items that needed to be discarded. The drawers needed cleaning, there was a pocket door that did not close properly, and a dirty chair in the bathroom that needed to be removed or replaced.

In bedroom number two, window coverings were dirty, the bed frames were loose, the mattress on one of the beds needed to be replaced, and the light fixtures over the head of each bed were a safety hazard. One light was held to the wall by a single screw and the other light was held on the wall by tape.

In bedroom number three, window coverings were dirty and some of the slats were broken. The bed frame was loose and one of the mattresses needed to be replaced. There were chairs in the room that needed repair and the lighting was poor.

In the attached closet to bedroom number three, there was a noticeable smell emanating from a pile of dirty clothes, extra home linen was randomly stored, and a chair in the closet needed to be removed.

The outside storage room housed a washing machine, dryer, household cleaning supplies, dry dog food, and extra food items for the residents. The residents' food items included unopened canned goods, variety packs of snacks and boxes of cereal. The room was cluttered with the contents intermixed. The animal's food and household cleaning supplies needed to be separated from the residents' food. The washer and dryer were both dirty inside and there were various holes in the wall throughout the room that needed to be patched.

There was age-appropriate play equipment in the home including computer games, a TV, and VCR. There was a variety of programs, books, resource material, and a computer.

There appeared to be a sufficient supply of food. However, some of the foods stored in the refrigerator and cabinets were opened and undated.

Subsequent to the initial visit, we visited again and found that a substantial number of the above-mentioned areas had been corrected. However, there were areas that still needed to be improved.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. Sand Hill management:**
  - a. Replace the missing exterior crawl space cover.**
  - b. Repair the kitchen stove.**
  - c. Clean the window coverings throughout the facility as needed.**
  - d. Repair/replace the blinds in bedroom number three.**
  - e. Repair the pocket door in bathroom number two.**

## II. PROGRAM SERVICES

### Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews

### Sample size for resident interviews: Two

### Comments:

Each resident received an initial assessment after being admitted into the Sand Hill program.

The Needs and Services Plans (NSPs) were not comprehensive, specific, measurable, attainable, or time limited. Additionally, there was no documentation indicating that each resident's authorized representative was involved in the development, updating, and modifying of the Needs and Services Plan. These findings were discussed with management during the exit conference who stated that they would be discussed with the facility's clinical social worker.

The Quarterly Reports utilized a standard multiple-choice format that included a brief comment. Detailed information was missing on each resident and input from the persons responsible for implementing the NSPs.

The residents reported, and documentation reflected, that they were not consistently receiving counseling services as described in the Program Statement. This was discussed with management during the exit conference who stated that the counselor had not been available for several weeks.

### Recommendations

2. **Sand Hill management:**
  - a. **Create Needs and Services Plans that are comprehensive, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time limited.**
  - b. **Include each resident and their authorized representative in the development and updating of the Needs and Services Plan.**
  - c. **Develop Quarterly Reports that are specific to each child's needs with input from the person implementing the child's Needs and Services Plan.**
  - d. **Provide consistent counseling services.**

### III. EDUCATIONAL AND EMANCIPATION SERVICES

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Two**

**Comments:**

Both residents were enrolled in school and provided cognitive stimulation through a tutor twice a week. The residents expressed dissatisfaction with the emancipation program because they did not receive daily living skills training from the staff. Both residents expressed an interest in becoming more involved in meal preparation, grocery shopping, and learning life skills. During the exit conference, management stated that the residents were not allowed to cook nor did they accompany staff grocery shopping. Management also acknowledged that staff was not providing daily living skills training.

**Recommendations**

- 3. Sand Hill management provide self-help, survival, and life skills training for all age-appropriate residents.**

### IV. RECREATION AND ACTIVITIES

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Two**

**Comments:**

The group home followed a monthly activity schedule developed by the staff. The residents stated that they were not encouraged to provide input and reported that the selection of activities was limited. Although the residents stated that they attended various outings, the outings were not listed on the recreation logs.

A review of the monthly activity logs reflected that there were no educational outings and limited community exposure. Church, tutoring, and clinical therapy sessions were included on the log, but are not recreational activities.

The residents stated that that they were not allowed to go to their room and spend leisure time lying on their beds to read a book, listen to music, or take a nap. The residents reported that staff told them that lying on their beds would mess them up so they were only allowed to get on their beds at bedtime. (While one resident was being interviewed a staff verbally reprimanded him for sitting on his bed.)

Both residents stated that they were allowed to participate in self-selected activities and that the group home provided transportation.

**Recommendations**

- 4. Sand Hill management:**
  - a. Include residents in the planning of recreational activities.**
  - b. Provide residents adequate and appropriate recreation programs that include educational and community activities.**
  - c. Allow residents to spend leisure/quiet free time as they wish.**

**V. PSYCHOTROPIC/OTHER MEDICATION**

**Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents**

**There were five residents placed in the group home at the time of the review. A review of case files was conducted for the two residents prescribed psychotropic medication.**

**Comments:**

Sand Hill maintained appropriate medication logs and current psychiatric evaluations for the residents on medication. However, the court authorizations were not current.

**Recommendations**

- 5. Sand Hill management maintain current court authorizations for psychotropic medications.**

**VI. PERSONAL RIGHTS**

**Method of assessment – Resident interviews**

**Sample size for resident interviews: Two**

**Comments:**

The residents expressed dissatisfaction with the facility. A concern brought up by both residents was that staff inadequately supervised them. Both residents reported that they were allowed to incite one another (i.e., talking about each other's parents) in the presence of staff that did not intervene. This usually led to a fight breaking out and everyone having points deducted, even those not involved. One resident stated that staff was always using the phone in another room leaving them unsupervised. One

resident indicated that he felt he could not talk to certain staff because of their use of profanity which made him afraid.

The residents stated that some staff were unnecessarily harsh and tried too hard to establish their authority. Staff's treatment of residents and the lack of adequate supervision was discussed with the agency's management who stated that the issues would be addressed immediately.

The residents participated in an initial orientation, but reported that discipline policies were unfairly enforced. Both residents reported that points were unfairly deducted from them and that they were unfairly kept from home passes to visit their families because of the discipline system. One resident stated that he did not have the opportunity to go home for a long time and acted up because of it. This was discussed with management during the exit conference who stated that one resident's social worker had stated that until the resident's behavior improved, he was not to go on a weekend pass. (A review of the resident's file revealed a note written by the social worker to that effect). The agency's management was advised that the court's orders for residents to have weekend visits with their family must be followed. This finding was also reported to the Department of Children and Family Services Group Home Consultant for follow-up.

The residents stated that the food was satisfactory, but complained that on weekends they only ate hot dogs or sandwiches.

Both residents expressed concern that they were made to attend the owner's church whether or not they wanted to, and because of that felt their religious freedom was not respected. This was discussed with management during the exit conference who concurred that the residents attended church on Sunday.

The residents reported that their rights were respected with regard to health services. However, both residents stated that if they refused to take their psychotropic medication their points would be taken. This was discussed with the agency's management who stated that when a resident refuses medication, it is documented as required, but no points were taken as some residents thought. In addition, management stated that residents have been reassured they do not lose points for refusing medication.

Telephone calls to social workers, attorneys or families are permitted. However, the residents felt that their rights to privacy during phone calls and visits are not respected. The residents reported that the household chores they are expected to do are fair.

**Recommendations**

- 6. Sand Hill management:**
  - a. Provide residents with appropriate supervision at all times.**

- b. **Develop discipline policies that are fair and just for all residents.**
- c. **Counsel staff regarding the appropriate interaction with residents and monitor their behavior.**
- d. **Allow residents to go home on weekend visits per court orders.**
- e. **Provide adequate meals for the residents during weekends.**
- f. **Permit residents to decide whether or not to attend religious services of their own choice.**
- g. **Provide residents with privacy during phone calls and visits.**

## **VII. CLOTHING AND ALLOWANCE**

### **Method of assessment – Review of relevant documents and resident interviews**

#### **Sample size for resident interviews: Two**

#### **Comments:**

Neither resident's clothing inventory met the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) standard for clothing. One resident did not have a bathrobe and the other resident did not have bedroom slippers or pajamas. The residents reported that they did not have a voice in the selection of their clothes, know how much their monthly clothing allowance was, or how often they received clothes.

The agency did not maintain a clothing allowance log that reflected the date, amount received, amount spent, and a balance for each resident as required by the Statement of Work. In addition, purchased clothing receipts were not available for review.

The residents were receiving at least the required weekly allowance. However, the residents expressed concern about the lack of rewards in place for positive and/or appropriate behavior.

Sand Hill provides residents with adequate personal care items and sufficient, secure space to store their personal items.

Neither resident had a life book.

#### **Recommendations**

##### **7. Sand Hill management:**

- a. **Furnish clothing items for the residents that meet DCFS' clothing standards for quality and quantity.**
- b. **Allow age-appropriate residents to select their own clothing.**
- c. **Properly maintain clothing allowance logs.**
- d. **Supply residents with the fifty dollars a month clothing allowance.**
- e. **Implement a point/levels/rewards behavioral control system by which residents can increase their base allowances.**
- f. **Provide each resident with a life book.**